



September 13, 2016

Michigan House Commerce and Trade Committee
Lansing, MI

Re: SB 853

Dear Committee members,

The Michigan Environmental Council (MEC), a coalition of more than 70 member organizations across the state, is opposed to SB 853 as drafted. This bill goes too far in attempting to preempt local action, is vaguely worded, and serves to shut off conversation on a legitimate issue facing our state and nation.

One of our organizations, the Alliance for the Great Lakes helps coordinate Adopt-a-Beach program around the Great Lakes. In 2015, volunteers removed over 4000 plastics bags from Michigan's beaches and nearly 15,000 around the Great Lakes during their cleanups. Unfortunately, the retail stores which originate these plastics bags are completely divorced from the cost and efforts their use has on communities across the state.

In addition to the cost associated with cleaning our natural areas and in potential lost tourism due to undesirable plastic pollution, there is a very tangible cost to our already cash strapped recycling industry. Washtenaw county's recycling facilities accrue more than \$200,000 in plastic-bag management a year, and this problem is far from unique to them.

With Washtenaw's ordinance, and similar ordinances being considered around Michigan and the United States, it is clear that this is an issue being faced by local governments, and taking away the ability to find a local solution as this bill does is an overreach of state government. In addition, this bill does not allow for discussions to continue at a state level to address the real issues presented by plastic bags. To shut down local control while not providing for any path to a solution is not sustainable and will allow the costs to local governments of managing these bags to continually rise. A provision in the bill that allows for a workgroup, advisory council, or Department to study the issue would help to ensure this problem is not buried under the current draft of this legislation for years to come.

Finally, we feel this bill is too broad in its current form. First, it appears that no municipality could ban glass containers on all beaches in the city. Glass on beaches, even private beaches is a health concern, and would not fit within the

exception of "litter prevention" allowed in the bill. Secondly, it shuts down innovative solutions to the plastic bag problem. Though all may not agree with the solution currently proposed by Washtenaw County, that does not mean that local governments should not be able to have further conversations on the topic. Two examples of potential alternative ways to go at the problem that would be preempted by this bill are: allowing a county to have retailers charge a 5 cent fee for a bag, but the retailer keeps that fee; or mandating that retailers that provide plastic bags provide a spot to return those bags, as many retailers are doing already.

MEC is opposed to the SB 853 as drafted, and we ask that the committee look at language to allow for the conversation on how to address plastic bags to continue either on the state or local level in some form.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sean Hammond".

Sean Hammond
Deputy Policy Director